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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. IV, No. 333, 15th Waning of Taboung 1379 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Friday, 16 March 2018



Vice President U Henry Van Thio, second from right, inspects a water supply system in Tachilek, Shan State yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union gov't funds rural development in Myebon

The Union Government has allotted Ks400 million in the 2017-2018 financial year budget for the development of 40 villages in Myebon Township, Rakhine State.

The Union Government has drafted a village development plan for 148 villages in Myebon Township for the 2017-2018 financial year. In the first phase of the plan, the funds will be divided into Ks10 million tranches for each of the first 40 villages.

The development plans include the paving of concrete and asphalt roads, and building jetties, concrete bridges, canals and reservoirs. The Department of Rural Development will provide the technology for the plan, while the rural development committee will facilitate it.

SEE PAGE-7

Confiscated land returned to farmers in Tachilek

THE Ministry of Defence returned more than 1,080 acres of confiscated farmland to farmers and the Shan State Government yesterday in the presence of Vice President U Henry Van Thio.

Speaking on the occasion in his capacity as the Chairman of the Central Committee for Scru-

tinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Land, Vice President U Henry Van Thio pledged that the Union Government would work to uplift the living standards of farmers and to find markets for agricultural products.

Out of the 1,081 acres of farmland abandoned by the

Ministry of Defence in Tachilek District, more than 385 acres were returned to 82 farmers. The remaining 696 acres were given to the Shan State Government.

"Believing that returning confiscated farmlands to farmers who make up 70 per cent of

the country's rural population would develop the agricultural sector and promote their living standard, organizations concerned are urged to continue to work for abandoning the remaining confiscated farmland," said U Henry Van Thio.

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OPINION

Foreign trade exceeds US\$30 billion and set a new record even before the end of the fiscal year

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'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses loans for development works

THE seventh regular session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its 15th-day meeting yesterday.

The Hluttaw put on record the study tour of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives, led by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, to Viet Nam. The tour was jointly organised by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Next, three ministries explained the 87.091 billion Japanese yen loan provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to conduct project works.

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw and Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin explained to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw about the 30.469 billion yen loan.

This was followed by Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Tha Oo explaining the 56.622 billion yen loan for the Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase II (I). The Deputy Minister said the Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I was on the 166-mile Yangon-Toungoo section and Phase II would be on the 220-mile Toungoo-Mandalay section. The project aims to repair and maintain the deteriorating condition of the railway line's basic infrastructure and related parts, raise the speed of the train from 64 km/hr (40 mph) to 100 km/hr (62 mph), ensure safe and secure travel, as well as improve the punctuality of train services. When the project is completed, travel for people living along the rail tracks extending to the Bago Region, Nay Pyi Taw Union area and the Mandalay Region will be more convenient, while the flow of commodities will increase, raising the income, as well as the capacity of Myanmar Railways. It will also upgrade the railway system on the main Yangon-Mandalay route with modern tracks and signalling systems. Once the project is completed, with modern DEMU (Diesel Electric Multiple Unit) trains, speeds up to 100 km/hr can be achieved, ensuring the travel period does not exceed eight hours. The benefits will be safe and convenient travel for people, and speedy transport of



U Hla Kyaw. PHOTO: MNA



U Kyaw Lin. PHOTO: MNA



U Tha Oo. PHOTO: MNA



U Maung Maung Win.



U Win Maw Tun. PHOTO: MNA



Dr. Khun Win Thaug.

goods, said the Deputy Minister.

The Deputy Minister explained that the loan would be utilised for civil engineering works and signalling/communication works, purchase of locomotives and coaches, installation of control systems, and the installation of concrete sleepers and associated materials.

The Deputy Minister requested the Hluttaw to grant its permission to accept the 56.622 billion yen loan from JICA for the Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase II (I).

Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win then explained that the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation would conduct the multi-purpose dam water management works, provide high-grade materials and accessories for the repair and maintenance of the dam, establish high-level farm lands, construct repair shops for farm machineries and equipment used in mechanised farms, set up inspection and test centres for farm machineries and equipment, while the Ministry of Construction would upgrade the rural roads and bridges.

By implementing the Yan-

gon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase II (I), the Ministry of Transport and Communications will create a safe, reliable and speedy rail transport system that will support the economic development of Myanmar. This is in accordance with the mid-term debt management strategy, as well as the policy on development assistance, set up by the nation. The Deputy Minister requested that the Hluttaw approve the loan of 87.091 billion yen for the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Ministry of Construction; and the Ministry of Transport and Communications to implement the development projects.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker then asked the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to discuss the loan to register their names.

Later, Deputy Minister for Education U Win Maw Tun, on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Sports, explained the matter of getting 22 million euros and 5 million euros loan from Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD), a French development agency, for general maintenance and upgrade of the capacity works of the Ministry

of Health and Sports National Health Laboratory (NHL), sent by the President.

With regard to this loan, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win said the implementing ministry was the Ministry of Health and Sports, and the project would help provide efficient services to the people. The Ministry of Health and Sports will request a budget when it is time to repay the loan. With the loan, the NHL in Yangon will be renovated to retain the building's original (historical) design, construct a new four-storey building and the main laboratory rooms. The project will support the development of Myanmar's health sector, raise the capacity to identify diseases, help study and prevent infectious and epidemic diseases, and conduct international-level laboratory tests and quality testing that will benefit the entire population.

The Deputy Minister explained to and requested the Hluttaw to discuss and approve the 22 million euros assistance from the AFD, after which the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker requested interested Hluttaw representatives who wanted to

discuss the loan to enrol their names.

Later, in his explanation on the report on the findings of the 2016-2017 fiscal year's (FY) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw development fund, Union Auditor General U Maw Than explained that in the 2016-2017 FY, 322 townships in 14 states and regions were each provided with Ks100 million, totalling Ks32.2 billion, while eight townships in the union area were each provided with Ks100 million, totalling Ks800 million. The Union Auditor General also explained the suggestions in the report.

The Report (5/2018) of the Public Accounts Joint Committee's findings and comments on the Union Auditor General's report was read by bill committee member U Bo Gyi, and a motion was then tabled for the Hluttaw to consider and discuss. An announcement was made for the Hluttaw representative to register to discuss the report.

Following this, 27 Hluttaw representatives discussed the report made by the Myanmar Hluttaw delegation that had attended the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly (IPU).

In his discussion, Dr. Khun Win Thaug of Kachin State constituency (11) supported the report and asked the people to conduct an in-depth study of the suggestions made by the Kofi Annan commission, accept according to the law those who ought to be considered as nationals and promote peaceful co-existence, while taking effective action against those who are entering illegally. He also said that ethnic nationals must be united, forgive and tolerate one another, and reduce ill feelings, as well as armed conflicts. These are the best responses to future international pressures and will help overcome the difficulties faced, he noted.

After the discussions, the decision of the Hluttaw on the 137th IPU Assembly report was taken. The Hluttaw agreed and confirmed the report and put on record the explanation of the implementation committee on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

The 16th-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will be held on 19 March.—Aye Aye Thant, Myo Thu Hein (MNA) ■

Vice President U Myint Swe visits Dakhla

VICE President U Myint Swe, who is in Morocco to attend the Crans Montana Forum on Africa and South-South Cooperation, visited the Museum of King Hassan II in the capital city of Rabat yesterday.

The Vice President arrived in Casablanca on 15 March. The Vice President and his entourage then flew to Dakhla from Casablanca airport. The Vice

President was welcomed by Dakhla State Governor Mr. Lamine Benomar at the airport.

The Vice President and his entourage then arrived at Bateau Hotel on the cruise ship, Rhapsody. The second part of the Crans Montana Forum on Africa and South-South Cooperation will be held onboard the cruise ship.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Vice President U Myint Swe visits the Museum of King Hassan II in the capital city of Rabat in Morocco yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Confiscated land returned to farmers in Tachilek

FROM PAGE-1

He reiterated that the Union Government has encouraged the post-harvest sector so that the farmers can earn more income and can find markets for their products.

The government is mak-

ing efforts for development of wholesale markets and contract farming in regions and states in attempts to prevent exploitation of the farmers.

Myanmar saw a record export of rice in the 2017-2018 year, with 3.2 million tons of rice, the



Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses the ceremony to return the confiscated land to farmers in Tachilek, Shan State yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio visits the home for the disabled and developmentally challenged children in Taunggyi. PHOTO: MNA

most in 73 years.

At the ceremony, a representative of the Ministry of Defence handed over the land use permits to the farmers.

Before attending the ceremony in Tachilek, Vice President U Henry Van Thio visited a home for the disabled and developmentally challenged children in Taunggyi and donated cash to

the home.

U Henry Van Thio also went to Inle Hotel Zone and assisted the officials concerned in promoting the hotel and tourism service in Shan State.

At the meeting with hoteliers there, the Vice President has called for cooperation between Shan State Government, hoteliers and local people in providing

services to travellers as more travellers are expected to visit the state when the Heho Airport, which is being upgraded, will be able to receive international charter flights.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio also visited a water supply facility in Tachilek and a local vineyard and winery in Taunggyi.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Japan will contribute to insurance, loan, electricity sectors in Myanmar

Japan will contribute to the insurance, loan and electricity sectors in Myanmar for its economic development, according to a report released by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

Japan's Ambassador to Myanmar Tateshi Higuchi read out a message sent by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe confirming his country's commitment to My-

anmar at the Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference.

A delegation, led by Ken Kobayashi, chair of Japan-Myanmar Economic Committee (Keidanren), and 50 Japanese businessmen and the UMFCCI jointly held the 3rd Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference on 13 March at the UMFCCI office.

At the conference, U Aung Htoo, Deputy Minister for Com-

merce, read a message sent by President U Htin Kyaw, where he noted that Japan had strongly supported Myanmar's changing process. He thanked Japan for its contribution in creating Thilawa and Dawei special economic zones, upgrading the Yangon-Mandalay railway system and river water improvement projects.

A panel of experts from the two countries discussed the ex-

isting laws and other legislations for investment in Myanmar under the topic "Myanmar Economic Community Development". They also highlighted the investments in the electric power sector, which is still weak in Myanmar, under the topic "Myanmar Construction Development".

Under the topic of "Establishing Human Resources Development", experts from the two countries discussed vocational

educational training courses to produce skilled workers in Myanmar.

The delegation from Japan included businessmen engaged in the airlines, electricity and power, transport, construction, plastic, finance and insurance, pharmaceutical and related businesses. They met with Myanmar businessmen for economic cooperation in their respective industries.—GNLM ■

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

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Taung Nyo dam examined by geological experts

UPGRADING the irrigation system at the Taung Nyo dam in Nattalin Township, Bago Region, has been accomplished using Japan's ODA loan, now it can safely supply water to farmlands in Bago Region.

On 12 February, a 6.13 magnitude earthquake rocked the region, and the epicenter was 17 miles south west of Pyu Township, and small quakes occurred 14 times up until 17 February.

The locations of all the quakes occurred in locations that are parallel to the dam. So, a team headed by U Zaw Oo, Assistant Director of the Geology Division measured the geological conditions of the dam by using advanced technology under the instruction of the Irrigation and



The successfully upgraded Taung Nyo dam in Nattalin Township, Bago Region supplies water to farmlands. **PHOTO: MDN**

Water Utilization Management Department.

The survey found that the dam has no dangerous faults even though its water level is

almost at the highest level and in spite of numerous earthquakes that rocked the region.

The dam was built in 1996 and supplies water for 50,000

acres of monsoon paddy farmland annually. It also irrigates water for summer paddy and winter crops.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Mawlamyine resident rewarded with Ks. 2 million for handing in ancient beads

A woman from Mawlamyine Township in Mon State was rewarded with more than Ks. 2 million (around US\$ 1,500) for handing in clay beads and stone beads which are believed to be from the Pyu period.

The ceremony was held at the Department of Archaeology and National Museum in Mawlamyine, Mon State in conjunction with cash awarding this morning. The woman identified as Daw Khin Win, Mupun Ward

in Mawlamyine handed the artifacts in to local authorities.

At the ceremony, Mon State Minister for Social Affairs U Htein Lin made an opening speech and Mon State Minister for Bamar Ethnic Affairs U Shwe Myint presented a certificate of honour to Daw Khin Win.

It was also attended by officials from the Department of Archaeology and National Museum and media.—Myanmar Digital News ■



Daw Khin Win, left, receives a certificate of honor for discovering ancient beads possibly from the ancient Pyu Period. **PHOTO: MDN**

Upgrading Yangon Region map

THE first talk on putting together an updated map of Yangon was held this morning in Yangon's City Hall.

Yangon mayor U Maung Maung Soe, Chairman of the Yangon City Development Committee, said that it is a state level plan that the State Counsellor asked for help while she met with Japan's Prime Minister.

The main intention is to produce an accurate map that can be used to draw up development plans, to assist urban development projects and to issue an official tourist guide map for visitors, he added.

"The map produced from this endeavor can be used

for various projects such as urban development, transportation network systems, infrastructure and property development," he said.

The project area includes 33 townships in the YCDC precinct and 8 townships out of the YCDC precinct. The drawing plan is expected to be completed in 2019.

The talk was organized by the Yangon Region Map Drawing Working Committee, which was formed on 20 November in 2017 with 15 members representing six departments of five ministries. The YCDC is an offshoot of the committee. — Myanmar Digital News ■

Vehicle entrance fees stopped at Man Shwe Set Taw Pagoda

VEHICLE entrance fees for the Man Shwe Set Taw Pagoda will not be collected as of 13 March, according to the board of trustees of Man Shwe Set Taw Pagoda.

The Man Shwe Set Taw Pagoda Festival is an 87-day long festival which is held from 21 January to 17 April in Minbu Township, Magway Region.

Tender winners for parking lots are collecting Ks.2500 per vehicle for an entrance fee that annoys festival goers, and the action received public criticism. On social media, people criticised that entrance fees should not be collected and it could affect the image of the pagoda.

The Magway Regional gov-

ernment yesterday instructed the board of trustees to stop collecting entrance fees at the pagoda. The regional government allows the tender winners to collect parking fees from vehicles that are parked overnight and long term parking in their areas in order to prevent traffic congestion along the roads near the pagoda.

The festival is teeming with visitors from all over Myanmar. During a previous two day holiday last month, a flock of visitors arrived at the festival, which resulted in accommodation problems and congested traffic on roads leading to the pagoda festival.—Myanmar Digital News ■



A storehouse for a huge supply of hybrid corn will have difficulty entering the market as prices rise due to low production. PHOTO: MDN

Hybrid corn price increased due to lower production

THE price of hybrid corn, known as the CP brand, in Yesagy Township this year has increased nearly 50% from previous years because farmers lack the desire to grow the grain following the high production costs, according to farmers and brokers in Magway Region.

Farmers saw meager profits previous years because the price of the grain

was decreased although their production costs were higher.

“Most farmers in our village grow chick peas this year because they are not interested in growing the hybrid corn strain because last year the farmers broke even and did not make any real profits,” said a farmer from Shwe Hlan village.

The price of corn recently is Ks.11, 500 for 18 viss. It

was around Ks.6000 for 18 viss last year.

“The biggest animal feed factory is in Mandalay, so farmers mostly sell their corn to that factory.

If they try to import corn to China, they have to wait for buyers and have to pay brokerage fees,” said U Aye Ko, chairman of the wholesale center in Yesagy Town.— Myanmar Digital News ■

Maese gate expected to achieve \$1 million target this FY

THE value of border trade through the Maese gate between Thailand and Myanmar is expected to reach US\$1 million in the current fiscal year (FY), according to trade figures.

From 1 April to 2 March this FY, the Maese gate conducted \$0.807 million worth of trade, including exports worth \$0.37 million and imports worth \$0.43 million.

The current trading figures have reached more than 80 per cent of the expected amount. Trading at the Maese gate is likely to hit the target,

said U Kyaw Thu Win, Assistant Director in-charge of the Maese trade station.

From November 2016, some 43 individual trading cards were issued. The main export items are onions, garlic, dried chillies, potatoes and locally produced tobacco, while cement, seasoning powder, soy milk, juice, detergent powder and coffee are imported into the country.

The border gate situated in Kayah State was officially opened on 27 October 2016 and started trading in November 2016. During the last FY, the value of trade at the

Maese gate was worth some 0.45 million, including \$0.22 million in exports and \$0.23 million in imports.

Additionally, the two countries have reached an agreement on making Thailand’s Mae Hong Son Province and Loikaw town in Kayah State sister cities.

If they sign an agreement on a cross-border trip plan, the tourism industry will improve. Unlike the previous situation, transport between Loikaw and Maese towns has also improved through spending from the state budget. – Wit Yee (IPRD)■

Smart cards issued to SMEs

THE Yangon Region government has issued smart cards to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), said U Tun Naing, Deputy Director of Yangon Region General Administration Department.

The General Administration Department collected data on SME businessmen from Mayangon Township on 12 and 13 March.

“We have collected information on the SMEs operating in the city as part of the govern-

ment’s project. It does not concern taxation. The smart cards will accelerate the processes of loan assistance, licencing and tax payment, as well as ensure the support of relevant government agencies,” said U Tun Naing.

The data on SMEs is being collected in the Yangon Region since December 2017. The Yangon regional government has issued smart cards to SMEs across Yangon’s 29 townships, including Mayangon.—GNLM■

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သတင်းစာများကို ဤဆိုင်များတွင်ဝယ်ယူဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါပြီ

- Market Place by City Mart (6.5 Mile)
- Market Place by City Mart (Damasidi Road)
- Market Place by City Mart (Junction City)
- City Mart (Aung San Stadium)
- City Mart (47th street)
- City Mart (Yankin)
- City Mart (China Town)
- City Mart (Myay Ni Gone)
- City Mart (FMI)
- City Mart (Junction Square)
- City Mart (Junction Maw Tin)
- City Mart (Sule Square)
- City Mart (Star City - Thanlyin)
- City Mart (Waizayandar)
- City Mart (Hledan)
- City Mart (Myanmar Plaza)
- City Mart (Junction 8)
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UMFCCI, India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce sign MoU to promote economic cooperation

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on promoting economic ties at the UMFCCI headquarters last Tuesday, according to a recent announcement made by the UMFCCI.

The MoU mentions forging of economic relations, exchange of trade information, conducting reviews, strengthening of friendship and discussion over bilateral cooperation activities. The MoU was signed by Dr Maung Maung Lay, vice chair of UMFCCI, and Sunil Seth, chair of India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce.

The signing ceremony was attended by Shweta Singh, first secretary of India's embassy to Myanmar, officials from the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce, joint-secretaries, executive members and officials of the UMFCCI and representatives from Kanbawza.

India formed the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce in September 2017. Bilateral trade between Myanmar and India in the first 10 months of this fiscal year was valued at US\$1.25 billion, including \$547 million in exports and \$709 million in imports. —GNLM ■

Union Minister meets employees from state-owned news outlets

The Union Minister for Information, the Deputy Minister, personnel from the Nay Pyi Taw printing press under the Printing and Publishing Department and employees from newspaper houses under the News and Periodical Enterprise met yesterday morning at Pho Waziya Hall, Kyemon newspaper house.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun, Printing and Publishing Department Director General, personnel from Nay Pyi Taw printing press, News and Periodicals Enterprise Managing Director, personnel from Myanma Alinn newspaper house, Kyemon newspaper house, Myanmar News Agency and Nay Pyi Taw newspaper house and officials.

At the meeting, the Union Minister said state-owned newspapers need to provide knowledge and information to readers, must be together with the readers and strive toward becoming a newspaper among the people. It must avoid presentations that are annoying and facts that cause undue concern to the people. It must write in such a way that does not affect international relations and relation between ethnic nationals. Criticisms and comments should be fair and made constructively. Myanmar Digital News produced by News and Periodicals Enterprise had been introduced and it should strive toward be-

coming the main news agency.

In addition, the Printing and Publishing Department is conducting beneficial works and knowledge for the people while printing textbooks annually for the Ministry of Education. Myanmar encyclopedias that were published 50 years ago are being edited and preparations being made to re-publish it with new additions. Preparations to publish well-known and valuable writings of Myanmar literature is also an honourable and proud pursuit that is being undertaken. Quality is most important in printing. All must not stop at a stage of being good, but strive toward achieving better results by working together, the Union Minister said.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said technology is advancing in the world and digital media and online media need to be established. Sooner or later, digital transformation and practices need to be done. However, print media is in existence to date and it can be expected to be around for a certain amount of time. State-owned newspapers should exist as the people's newspaper and deliver information the government want to provide and people would like to know. Efforts must be made to use technology to distribute and provide better information. Those working in the newsroom need to know the depth of the news, usages in the title or heading, colors to use and



Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint addresses the meeting with employees from newspaper houses under the News and Periodicals Enterprise in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

avoid and page layouts.

Afterwards, Printing and Publishing Department Director General U Aung Myo Myint, News and Periodicals Enterprise U Kyaw Soe explained about the status of resolving matters submitted and discussed by the staff in the previous meeting.

Personnel from the Printing and Publishing Department and News and Periodicals Enterprise then suggested, discussed and provided their opinions on conducting their works more successfully and their wishes, to which officials offered explanations.

The Union Minister then gave concluding remarks and the meeting came to a close.

Later in the afternoon, the Union Minister and Deputy Minister arrived at Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) station in Tatkon Township and met with the staff.

In this meeting, the Union Minister commented on publishing timely news, to include images and sounds as well as letters in the Myanmar Digital News. A peace music ceremony and democracy movie festival was successfully held last year. To increase the success of the country's oldest television work, creation of art and technical expertise should be raised and all the staff need to work together toward progress, said the Union Minister.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun said Myanma Radio and Television is where the people's voices are mirrored and it has the duty to spread the news more widely as it is the digital age.

MRTV Director-General U Myint Htway then explained the status of resolving matters submitted and discussed by the staff in the previous meeting.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Thura U Shwe Mann in a meeting with US Ambassador Scot Marciel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Thura U Shwe Mann receives US Ambassador to Myanmar

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received the United States Ambassador to Myanmar Scot Marciel at the Hluttaw Affairs Building I-11 in Nay Pyi Taw

yesterday morning. During the meeting, they exchanged views and discussed matters related to bilateral relations between the two countries, legal affairs, as well as the development and democratisation process. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee coord meeting

A joint bill committee coordination meeting on Union Tax Bill was held yesterday afternoon in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Building D, second floor meeting hall.

Present at the meeting were Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, Joint Bill Committee and Public Account Joint Committee chairman U Aye Tha Aung, Joint Bill Committee deputy chairmen, secretaries, joint secretaries and Public Account Joint Committee members, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win, seven Hluttaw represent-

atives who discussed the bill in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment commission members, officials from Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Ministry of Commerce, Union Attorney-General Office and Central Bank of Myanmar, business persons from Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and officials from Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office. —Myanmar News Agency■



The coordination meeting being held on 2018 Union Tax Bill in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Union gov't funds rural development in Myebon

FROM PAGE-1

The Department for Rural Development, in collaboration with the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund, has drawn up the village development plan and also consulted with village residents regarding the final drafts of the plan.

Township Administrator U Ba Saw told reporters that the

village development plans will promote villagers' participation and also encourage inclusive decision-making processes. He said the village development plan would give guidelines to help the union government, state government and the development associations in deciding policies and allotting funds.—Kyaw Thu Htet ■

Correction

An article on Page 7 in the 15 March edition of the Global New Light of Myanmar contained an error. In the third-from-last paragraph of the story headlined "Union officials explain cause for exodus, ARSA threats, repatriation obstruction", the sentence should read, "He also said that malnutrition is caused by contagious diseases, infestations, and infections which would be the responsibility of the concerned ministry



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint addresses the meeting on ensuring rights of access to information for the deaf community in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Ministry of Information champions information access for deaf community

THE Ministry of Information is committed to cooperating with relevant organisations to ensure rights of access to information for the deaf community in Myanmar; said Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint.

He made the remark at a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

"It is vital importance for disabled people to get equal rights", Dr. Pe Myint said.

Besides the rights to basics such as food, clothing and shelter; members of the physically challenged community also need easy access to information, he added.

Cooperation is being made between the Ministry for In-

formation and the Ministry for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in transmitting news using sign languages on state-run television.

"Starting from September 1, 2015, broadcasting of local news using sign language has been aired. Next we could broadcast announcements, educative talks and information regarding rights of voting for the handicapped", said Dr. Pe Myint.

These days, media is a powerful weapon which can influence the people, he said. As for the ministry, plans are underway to broadcast weather reports and other educative talks. The ministry is still planning to broadcast

many new programmes which can be accessed and understood by the physically and mentally challenged, he said.

The Ministry of Information will cooperate with other relevant ministries and organisations to ensure equal rights and implement successful programmes.

Director U Kyaw Kyaw, Advisor Daw Yu Yu Swe and other officials explained the purposes of holding this discussion and challenges they faced in the process. Regarding the presentation, Director Daw Moe Thuzar Aung clarified the implementation processes and other related missions of the Ministry.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Foreigners allowed in Mogok Region with ministry permission

FOREIGN tourists will be allowed to visit Mogok for three days to attend the city's 800th anniversary celebration with the permission of authority concerned, it was learnt.

Although still considered a restricted area, foreigners can apply for permission from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, the Mandalay Region Government office and local authorities, according to Daw Khin Ohn Myint, the secretary of the celebration committee. This month marks the 800th anniversary of the discovery of gems and subsequent founding of the city of Mogok, a place that is world-renowned for the quantity and

quality of rubies.

"The three-day celebration will take place in Mhone Kwin field, in central Mogok, from March 29 to 31, and the process of applying for permission will take about ten days through the travel and tour companies in Yangon and Mandalay", Daw Khin Ohn Myint said.

The foreign visitors can go to Mogok via the Mandalay-Mattara_ThabeikKyin_Mogok routes. Foreign visitors can study the ways of life of the local Mogok people who mine, trade, cut and polish gemstones. Mogok produces 90 per cent of the world's rubies.

One of the tourist destina-

tions in this region is the Htar-PweGem Market, where the business of selling and buying rough gemstones thrives on a commercial scale.

The 800th anniversary celebration aims at creating job opportunities in the tourism sector and raising the socio-economic life of the local people. Tourism can be a boon for the local business and mining industry.

For the convenience of the foreigners, homestay arrangements are being made by the authority, in addition to hotels and motels. Local visitors can stay at monasteries free of charge if the hotels and motels are fully booked.—Khaing Sat Wai ■

No one should be allowed to politicise the repatriation process

MYANMAR is ready to begin repatriation of refugees, ensuring human rights, tolerance and security for them.

We've already notified the Bangladesh side that 374 refugees are verified and can immediately start repatriation at their convenience.

We sent about 1,250 names, consisting of 508 people of Hindu faith and 750 people of Muslim faith, during the first Joint Working Group Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw on 15-16 January 2018. We are awaiting their repatriation.

We have recently received a list of 8,032 people from Bangladesh during the Myanmar-Bangladesh Home Ministers' Meeting held in Dhaka on 16 February.

The verification process was accordingly conducted by our immigration authorities. However, it was found out that the forms received from Bangladesh were not the

Verification Form agreed upon by both sides during the First Meeting of the Joint Working Group.

To our surprise, on 7 March some international media reported that a senior member of the Bangladesh cabinet voiced his pessimistic view on our repatriation efforts.

The refugees are not refusing to return due to fear. There are high expectations that have lured them into that and there also expectations from ARSA and their supporters. Concerning their security, we have done all we can, but we alone are not responsible to take care of their security. Because it is ARSA who tried to interrupt the process by setting off explosions such as landmines while we were starting our repatriation process.

UEHRD is also working to create economic opportunities for returnees and providing effective humanitarian aid. They are holding negotiations for resettlement and for development of the economy and long-lasting peace.

For security, what we can guarantee is that anyone who comes back will have a secure environment as anywhere else in the country.

We would like to remind the international media that our country was in successful democratic transition because of the help of the international media. That's why in the future, we would like to request the international media to support our democratisation process and the development of our country.

So we implore the media to get the whole narrative rather than cherry picking and choosing parts of the story that are very sensational and can be put in headlines. Please try to put in more balanced views. That is all we can hope for and that is the purpose of this press conference.

Foreign trade exceeds US\$ 30 billion and set a new record even before the end of the fiscal year

THE government and the people are striving in harmony in all sectors for Myanmar, a developing country to reach the status of a developed one. Foreign trade is much supportive for national economic progress. Hence, the Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce is applying various means to widen reliable markets, produce marketable goods, facilitate exports and ensure rapid growth of the foreign trade sector in accord with the aims adopted by the ministry.

Myanmar has maritime trade with global countries as well as border trade with neighbouring countries. The country hit a new foreign trade level even before the end of the fiscal year 2017-2018 exceeding the USD 30 billion mark as the Ministry of Commerce is cooperating and coordinating with all stakeholders including relevant ministries, UMFCCI and sister associations, entrepreneurs and farmers.

Myanmar's trade volume for fiscal year 2017-2018 (from April to March 2) was over USD 30 billion – over USD 13 billion worth of exports and over USD 17 billion worth of imports. According to the official list, the country could export USD 2 billion more and import another USD 2 billion more this fiscal.

The country exported US\$ 2784 million worth of agricultural good this year, of which the main items were over 1.2 million tons of beans and pulses valued at US\$ 807 million, over 3.2 million tons of rice and broken rice valued at US\$ 1035 million, over 0.136 million ton of rubber valued at US\$ 179 million, one million ton of fruits valued at US\$ 169 million and over 1.3 million tons of corn valued at US\$ 272 million. Up to now, the country could export 1.7 million more rice and broken rice than the previous year, earning US\$ 545 million more. It is a new record in the 70-year period. The country also has exported over 0.2 million more tons of corn and earning US\$ 48 million more.

Up to 2 March 2018, the country exported over US\$ 3 billion worth of natural gas. Gas is the top item of the export list. Garment export stood second with a



Farmers thresh crops using an automated machine. Not many farmlands have access to modern technology meaning farmers cannot keep up with the high demand for rice in Myanmar and Southeast Asia. PHOTO: PHOE KWAR

value of US\$ 2.332 billion.

Up to 2 March 2018 Myanmar exported over 500,000 tons of marine products valued at US\$ 634 million. It could export about 60000 more tons than the previous fiscal, earning US\$ 114 million more. The main items are over 350,000 tons of fishery products valued at US\$ 360 million, over 18,000 tons of prawns valued at US\$ 67 million, over 18,000 tons of crabs valued at US\$ 69 million, over 9000 tons of eels valued at US\$ 28 million, and about 100,000 tons of other marine products valued at US\$ 108 million.

This fiscal year's rise in the marine exports came alongside the surge in livestock products. This fiscal saw livestock product exports reaching over US\$ 44 million, which is US\$ 35 million more than the previous fiscal. The rise in the livestock exports is a result of the ministry's announcement released on 9-10-2017. The announcement permits buffalo and cow owners to export their goods through legal channel with the aim of replacing the illegal trade with legal trade, ensuring income generation for

farmers and serving their interest. After the announcement, the country could export 2500 heads of sheep valued at US\$ 0.045 million, 1863 heads of buffalo valued at US\$ 2.442 million, and 13976 heads of cattle valued at US\$ 16.771 million.

This fiscal saw mineral exports reached US\$ 1414 million, which is US\$ 503 million more than the previous fiscal. The main items were mineral and ore whose export value was US\$ 614 million and jade exports valued at US\$ 439 million.

The country imported US\$ 16.975 billion worth of goods in fiscal year 2017-2018, up US\$ 1.6 billion from the previous year's US\$ 15.335 billion. The main items were cars and parts valued at US\$ 1445 million, machines and parts valued at US\$ 1121 million, steel and construction materials valued at US\$ 655 million, phones and accessories valued at US\$ 394 million, oil products valued at US\$ 568 million, chemical fertilizers valued at US\$ 295 million, chemical fibers valued at US\$ 239 million, medicines valued at US\$ 483 million. These

items were imported in line with the national requirement.

More Oil products including diesel, petrol and airplane fuel, airplane parts, machines and parts, chemical fibers and medicines were imported this year than the previous year. In fact, these items are essential requirements for the nation, important raw materials of SMEs, and healthcare requirements for the people.



Sifting and sorting the grain is still done manually in many farms in Myanmar. PHOTO: PHOE KWAR

drawing the Safeguard Law on Increased Import and the Anti-dumping and Countervailing Law in accord with the WTO procedures to protect the local manufacturers as imports are growing annually.

The e-Payment system was introduced in 2017 for all cash transaction with the government through the Myanmar Citizens Bank. Now the MPU-Myanmar Payment Union has been initiated in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon since 19 June 2017. Beginning 1 September 2017 the MPU system was adopted at Muse and Myawady border trade zones. Plans are under way to introduce the system in all other trade zones.

Whatever coordinated efforts have been made for the facilitation of trade there remain challenges and difficulties. They include climate, natural disasters, rise in production cost, lack of quality strains, rise in transport cost, weakness in value-added goods, dependence on international markets and demand, and lack of modern production methods.

The Ministry of Commerce relaxed the regulations for export and import licenses and reduced HS Code lines of the Negative List to just 4818. It is inviting advices from the related departments and organizations to further lessen the number of lines.

The ministry applied all necessary means to facilitate trade and import and export processes within the legal framework. It is

The rising logistic cost is hampering the country from standing shoulder to shoulder with the neighbouring in the supply chain. There are also port problems. The government in office is striving in all sectors for all-round development of the country. It formed the Private Sector Development Committee with Vice-President at the helm. The committee is coordinating with the ministries in finding ways to develop the private businesses.

The current government is striving to boost foreign trade. In so doing, it is coordinating with the relevant ministries, organizations, wholesales centres, business companies, farmers, cementing bilateral cooperation with the trade partners, sending trade missions, finding new markets, and reducing trade regulations. Thanks to all these endeavours, bilateral foreign trade has exceeded USD 30 billion even before the end of the fiscal year, up USD 4 billion from the previous fiscal year.

Translation: TMT

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Order 15/2018
14th Waning of Taboung, 1379 ME
15th March, 2018
Termination of duty of Member of the Nay Pyi Taw Council

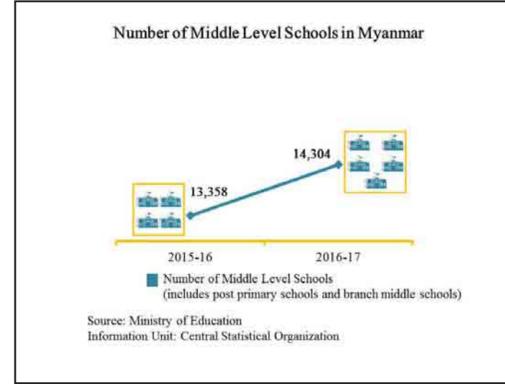
In accordance with the provisions stated in article 286 (a), sub-section (3) (aa) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 83 (a) of the Union Government Law and in article 20 (a) of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Law, Member of the Nay Pyi Taw Council U Tin Htut has been terminated from his position.

Sd/ Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Order 14/2018
14th Waning of Taboung, 1379 ME
15th March, 2018
Appointment of Rakhine State Minister for Development Affairs

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 262 (f) and in article 264 (c) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 19, (c) and Section 82 (c) of the Union Government Law and Section 8 (g) and Section 56 (a) of Region or State Government Law, U Win Myint has been appointed as the Rakhine State Minister for Development Affairs.

Sd/ Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar



US students stage walkout against gun violence

WASHINGTON—From Washington to Los Angeles, students walked out of US classrooms Wednesday in the largest grassroots protest against gun violence seen in years, demanding action one month to the day after a deadly shooting rampage at a Florida high school.

Hundreds of teenagers from Washington area schools gathered outside the White House, holding up signs reading “Books Not Bullets” and “Protect People Not Guns” before marching on the US Capitol.

“We want to show Congress and politicians we are not standing by, we are not silent anymore,” said 17-year-old Brenna Levitan, who was at the protest with her mother.

“Parkland is going to be the last school shooting.”

Students in dozens of other cities in all 50 states staged similar demonstrations and observed a moment of silence to honor the 14 students and three adult staff killed a month ago at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

In Washington, several hours after the protests broke up, US lawmakers took their first significant step to address school gun violence since the Parkland shooting.

The House of Representatives voted 407-10 to fund violence prevention measures at schools including boosting security, mental health screening and



Thousands of students sat for 17 minutes outside the White House in honor of the victims of last month's high school shooting in Florida. **PHOTO: AFP**

creating anonymous reporting systems so students can report threats.

But Congress has yet to tackle the more controversial aspects of gun control demanded in the wake of the Parkland shooting.

These include expanded background checks for gun sales, a ban on assault weapons and raising the minimum age for some firearms purchases.

- ‘We want change’ -

Dressed in the school's maroon colors, students at Stoneman Douglas visited memorials to their slain classmates and

hugged and cried.

At a high school in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, students marched to the football field and assembled in a heart formation to pay tribute to the victims.

In Los Angeles and other cities, teenagers spelled out the protest slogan “#ENOUGH” by lying down on the ground on sports fields.

In Washington, students were joined by Democratic members of Congress at the Capitol.

Speakers denounced the National Rifle Association (NRA), the powerful US gun lobby, and demanded that Congress enact

tougher laws on gun ownership.

“You, the young people of this country, are leading the nation,” Senator Bernie Sanders told the crowd.

“People are sick and tired of gun violence and the time is now for all of us, together, to stand up to the NRA.”

In New York, students -- many of whom wore orange, the color of gun control -- walked out from more than 50 schools.

“We want change,” and “Am I next?” they chanted.

Press secretary for New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, Eric Phillips, said “just over 100,000”

students took part from the city's schools.

The “National School Walkout” was intended to last for 17 minutes, one for each victim.

But tens of thousands of students around the country decided to skip school entirely and protest instead.

- ‘No guns in schools’ -

At the White House, 17-year-old Farah Parmah, who goes to Thomas Wootton High School in Rockville, Maryland, said President Donald Trump's controversial proposal to arm and train teachers “is just a bad, bad idea.”

“Gun violence has taken way too many lives this year,” said Parmah, who is 17.

“There should be no guns in schools.”

White House spokesman Raj Shah said Trump “shares the students' concerns about school safety.”

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton praised the students Wednesday evening, calling them an “inspiration to millions of Americans who know commonsense gun reform is long overdue.”

The nationwide protest was held one month to the day after Nikolas Cruz, a troubled 19-year-old former student at Stoneman Douglas, unleashed a hail of gunfire on his one-time classmates.

Cruz, dressed in a red prison jumpsuit, appeared in court in Fort Lauderdale on Wednesday and a judge entered a not guilty plea on his behalf.—AFP ■

Joint expert team uncovers heat shock gene enabling African insect to survive dehydration

MOSCOW — The African mosquito *Polypedilum vanderplanki* using its special protein, which in the cells of other hosts triggers a mechanism of resistance to stress, dehydrates its body to survive desiccation. The results of the study by Russian and Japanese scientists were published in the prominent scientific journal PNAS, the press office of Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology said.

The researchers believe that

this phenomenon will be helpful in understanding the mechanism of drying human and animal cells and later bringing them back to life. The larvae of *Polypedilum vanderplanki* resemble an ordinary bloodworm that inhabit ephemeral puddles. To survive in such conditions, it goes into anhydrobiosis - a state when the body almost completely dries out - while all physiological and biochemical processes in the body come to a stop. This transition

allows the insect to surmount unfavorable conditions. To go into anhydrobiosis, the mosquito larva replaces all the water in its body with disaccharide trehalose. In such a “sugared” or crystallized state, the larva could exist for years, remaining resistant to stress impact, for example, to treatment with liquid nitrogen or acetone. Up till now, how the genes responsible for the drying of the larva are controlled had remained a mystery. The joint

Russian-Japanese research team found the protein, which activates the genes that help the larvae enter into anhydrobiosis. It turns out that a protein, well known to the scientific community, directs this process. This protein is a heat shock transcription activator that in the cells of many other animals initiates the protective response to stress. With this, the African mosquito managed to adapt it for its purposes.

“This is a fascinating exam-

ple of the plasticity of regulatory systems, in particular of such conserved ones. However, this finding is only the first step in a whole slew of studies. The protein discovered activates about 30% of the genes responsible for drying larva. What is the driving force for activating other genes and rehydration when a larva exits its dormant state, are questions for future research,” said Pavel Mazin, the first author of the article.—Tass ■

US-Bangla Airlines suspends flight to Kathmandu following crash

KATHMANDU— Following the air crash at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Nepal which left at least 51 people dead on Monday, the US-Bangla Airlines has suspended flights to Kathmandu for an indefinite period.

The airline headquartered in Dhaka said in a statement on Thursday that they have stopped operating the Dhaka-Kathmandu-Dhaka flights temporarily.

A passenger plane of Bangladesh's private US Bangla Airlines crashed and burst into flames while landing at Nepal's international airport with 71

people onboard.

Amid the rumors of miscommunication between the pilot and the air traffic control causing the accident, the Nepalese government has already formed a panel under the leadership of Former Secretary to initiate an investigation on the crash.

"At this stage, we have no further information concerning the circumstances of the accident and US-Bangla is not in a position to speculate on the cause of this tragedy," the company has said on its website.—Xinhua ■

5-magnitude earthquake rocks southern Philippines

MANILA— A shallow 5-magnitude earthquake hit Bukidnon province in the southern Philippines on Thursday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

The Phivolcs said the quake struck at 3:19 p.m. (0719 GMT), 19 km southwest of Ta-

lakag, a town of Bukidnon with a depth of 001 km.

It said the tremor was felt strongest in Iligan City, Cagayan de Oro City and Kailangan town, all in the southern Philippines. The institute said it does not expect the quake to cause damage.—Xinhua ■



Russian President Vladimir Putin attended a demo flight of an upgraded supersonic strategic bomber Tu-160 in January. PHOTO: TASS

Aeroflot ready to become first customer of civilian supersonic jet

MOSCOW— Aeroflot will be happy to become the first customer of a new Russian civilian supersonic jet, Chief Executive Officer of the Russian flag carrier Vitaly Savelyev said on the air with Rossiya 24 TV Channel on Thursday.

"It will be good for us if Aeroflot receives an authority and we become first customers. We will be pleased to receive a superson-

ic jet," Savelyev said.

Concorde and Tu-144 supersonic jets that turned out to be unprofitable "were born before their time," Savelyev said. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to create an economical jet now, when new technologies and composite materials are in place, the top manager added.

Russian President Vladimir

Putin attended a demo flight of an upgraded supersonic strategic bomber Tu-160 in January 2018. The head of state suggested making a civilian version of this aircraft to save flight time. Chief Executive of the United Aircraft Corporation Yuri Slyusar told the President that the corporation already has a design for such a civilian supersonic airplane.—Tass ■

Researchers uncover new ways that E. coli processes lactose

MOSCOW— A scientific team under the guidance of Skoltech-Professor Mikhail Gelfand has discovered a previously unknown way of converting lactose with the bacteria, *Escherichia coli* (*collibacillus*) inhabiting human (and other mammalian) bowels. The bacteria uses genes designed for the metabolism of other substances. The study's results were published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

The results obtained testify to the possible multifunctionality of enzymes, which were considered before to be extremely specialized. This discovery brings up a variety of complementary issues concerning biochemical characteristics, peculiarity, and affinity to various substrates of enzymes.

E. coli tends to routinely feed on glucose, but in the absence of this substance, the bacteria could switch to other substances,



The results obtained testify to the possible multifunctionality of enzymes, which were considered before to be extremely specialized PHOTO: TASS

for example, lactose. *E. coli* is capable of efficiently switching between different "foods" within a few hours because the genes responsible for particular tasks, for instance, for absorbing lactose, are not scattered over the entire bacterial chromosome but are amassed

in groups, in operons. This sort of composition helps in regulating the genes functioning, switching off needless genes upon shifting from processing glucose to processing lactose.

Previously, it has been assumed that *E. coli* has only one metabolic pathway of process-

ing lactose, but the researchers have discovered that the operon of *collibacillus* required for the breakdown of sulfur-containing carbohydrates contain very similar shared arrangements of genes with another operon of other bacteria - *bacillus* that is responsible for processing lactose. The researchers assumed that this operon of *E. coli* might also take part in the utilization of lactose, and the experiments upheld the hypothesis by showing that genes that enable the metabolism of carbon disulfide are involved in processing lactose. These genes were active when the lactose was present in the surrounding medium and switched off upon the absence of lactose. Moreover, even if the traditional pathway of processing lactose is deactivated, the bacteria can grow and breed using lactose as a primary food source.—Tass ■

Heavy rain snarls traffic in Kenya's Nairobi

NAIROBI — Heavy rain that started early Thursday flooded Kenya's Nairobi, cutting off some key city roads and affecting flow of vehicles at large.

Poor drainage system has been blamed for worsening the mayhem and traffic jams in the wake of the heavy rain, which prompted motorists and commuters to adopt survival strategies to reach their work stations.

Nairobi Traffic Police commander Joshua Omukata appealed to motorists to exercise caution and be patient while on the roads. Omukata said traffic flow is extremely slow and a number of vehicles had been stuck on the roads.

"There is poor drainage at large and after the rains we have problems. Most roads are affected by the floods," he said. The police commander said more traffic personnel were mobilized to help manage the situation.—Xinhua ■

Syria conflict rages as war enters eighth year

BEIRUT — Syria's lacerating conflict entered its eighth year Thursday with the country riven by international power struggles, as Turkey encircled a besieged northern Kurdish enclave, while Russian-backed regime forces pounded into shrinking rebel areas near Damascus. The bloodshed, which has devastated huge swathes of the country since it started on 15 March, 2011 when the government of President Bashar al-Assad cracked down on mostly peaceful protests, has splintered into ever more complicated conflicts. In the latest fighting, Ankara-backed forces launched a bombardment of Afrin and closed in on the main city, in an offensive that could redraw the map in northern Syria. The development came as regime forces, backed by Moscow, broke into a key town in the beleaguered rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta late Wednesday, driving further into the last opposition bastion outside Damascus.



Civilians have fled Afrin city in recent days as battles rage between Turkish-backed forces and Kurdish fighters. **PHOTO: AFP**

More than 1,220 civilians — a fifth of them children — have been killed in the rebel-held enclave since the Syrian regime launched a ferocious air and ground offensive on 18 February. International efforts have consistently failed to stop one of the deadliest wars of the century, with more than 350,000 people killed since the conflict first erupted, and more than half of Syria's pre-war

population of 20 million displaced. While the past few months saw the collapse of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" — an experiment in jihadist statehood declared in 2014 in swathes of Syria and Iraq — world powers have since sought to carve out increased influence in the region.

US-backed Kurds hold oil-rich territory in north-eastern Syria covering 30 per cent of the country and

a motley assortment of Turkish-backed Arab rebels are cutting a third haven in the northwest. Ankara, which launched a deadly ground and air offensive against the Kurdish-majority enclave of Afrin on 20 January, vowed on Wednesday that its encirclement of the main city "will have been completed by the evening", a Turkish presidency source said. The claim was laughed off by a

top official in the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which controls Afrin. "It sounds like Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is daydreaming when he says Afrin will fall tonight," Redur Khalil told AFP. On Wednesday, Turkish bombing raids killed 10 fighters loyal to the Syrian regime, which has deployed pro-government forces to the fray after the Kurds asked for help.

Shells rained down on Afrin city, killing 10 civilians including four children.

Displaced families have swelled the city's population to around 350,000, and officials feared a humanitarian crisis should Turkish forces draw closer. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Wednesday that Turkey-led forces controlled 70 per cent of the wider Kurdish enclave, after seizing several villages. 'Anything that moves'

On the outskirts of Damascus, hundreds of kilometres (miles) south of Af-

rin, another humanitarian emergency was unfolding in Eastern Ghouta. The Observatory said regime forces had penetrated into the town of Hammuriyeh in the enclave and were able to take control of parts of it amid heavy bombardment. On Wednesday, an AFP correspondent saw a man in the doorway of a building holding the bodies of his two dead children. A doctor in the area said rescue teams could not get to victims because of the intensity of the bombardment. "The wounded are on the roads. We can't move them. The war planes are targeting anything that moves," Ismail al-Khateeb said. The United Nations has called for urgent medical evacuations for more than 1,000 people who desperately need medical treatment outside the besieged area. A trickle of evacuations from Ghouta's largest town Douma began Tuesday under a deal with rebels, and more patients were allowed out Wednesday.—AFP ■

Afghan battle kills one militant, wounds three in northern Faryab

MAIMANA — At least one militant has been killed and three others injured as security forces operations against Taliban insurgents have been continuing in the northern Faryab province, an army spokesman in the northern region said

Thursday. The operations, according to Mohammad Hanif Rezai, is underway in Goroghli area of the troubled Shirin Tagab district since Wednesday and so far one insurgent has been killed and three others sustained injuries.

Without mentioning the possible casualties of security forces, Rezai said that crackdown against militants would continue until Shirin Tagab district and adjoining areas are cleared of the insurgents.—Xinhua ■

Top bottled water brands contaminated with plastic particles

MIAMI — The world's leading brands of bottled water are contaminated with tiny plastic particles that are likely seeping in during the packaging process, according to a major study across nine countries published Wednesday. "Widespread contamination" with plastic was found in the study, led by microplastic researcher Sherri Mason of the State University of New York at Fredonia, according to a summary released by Orb Media, a US-based non-profit media collective.

Researchers tested 250 bottles of water in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Thailand, and the United States. Plastic was identified in 93 per cent of the samples, which included major name brands such as Aqua, Aquafina, Dasani,

Evian, Nestle Pure Life and San Pellegrino. The plastic debris included polypropylene, nylon, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is used to make bottle caps. "In this study, 65 per cent of the particles we found were actually fragments and not fibers," Mason told AFP. "I think it is coming through the process of bottling the water. I think that most of the plastic that we are seeing is coming from the bottle itself, it is coming from the cap, it is coming from the industrial process of bottling the water." Particle concentration ranged from "zero to more than 10,000 likely plastic particles in a single bottle," said the report. On average, plastic particles in the 100 micron (0.10 millimeter) size range — considered "microplastics," — were

found at an average rate of 10.4 plastic particles per liter. Even smaller particles were more common — averaging about 325 per liter. Other brands that were found to contain plastic contaminated included Bisleri, Epura, Gerolsteiner, Minalba and Wahaha.

Experts cautioned that the extent of the risk to human health posed by such contamination remains unclear. "There are connections to increases in certain kinds of cancer to lower sperm count to increases in conditions like ADHD and autism," said Mason. "We know that they are connected to these synthetic chemicals in the environment and we know that plastics are providing kind of a means to get those chemicals into our bodies."—AFP ■

Notification on Changing Pesticide Distributor

Regarding with the following pesticide produced by Bion Tech Inc Co., Ltd. manufacturer, registered at Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, shall change its original domestic distributor Seven Tigers Trading Co., Ltd. to Vanida Myanmar Co., Ltd. and Bion Tech Inc Co., Ltd. shall onward import and distribute the product through new distributor.

Sr.	Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Type of Registration	Register No.
1.	BIONBAC	Bacillus subtilis 1 x 10 ⁹ cfu/g WP	Provisional	P 2017-3990

Therefore, it is to notify that if any objection would like to object on changing of distributor may submit it to Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogon,

Insein within two weeks from the date of Notification.
Address - Seven Tigers Trading Co., Ltd.

No. (4), Thiri Myaing Street, Htauk Kyant (Southern),

Mingalardon Township, Yangon, Myanmar.

Phone No : 09-5280693, 09-794868499

Philippine poor pay the price for divorce ban

MANILA — For well-off people like politician Pantaleon Alvarez, getting out of a bad marriage in the Philippines is pricey but feasible -- but for the nation's poorest and most vulnerable citizens it is nearly impossible.

That's because heavily Catholic Philippines and the Vatican are the last two places on Earth where divorce is outlawed.

For the nation's 100 million people, the only exit from a union gone wrong is an embarrassing -- and labyrinthine -- process that often amounts to a luxury.

But lawmakers, including Alvarez, have launched a new legislative effort to legalise divorce which activists believe could transform the lives of impoverished women trapped in toxic marriages.

The bill has been propelled forward by Alvarez, who is speaker in the lower



Surveys show a majority of Filipinos have backed legalising divorce since 2014. **PHOTO: AFP**

House of Representatives and an ally of President Rodrigo Duterte.

In an interview with AFP, he said ending his first marriage cost him a million pesos (\$19,200), which is more than triple what an average family in the Philippines makes in a year. Like thousands of Filipinos, he did it through a civil procedure called annulment, whereby a judge declares a marriage invalid, generally because the spouses had a "psychological incapacity".

It requires applicants to undergo a mental exam, testify in court and sometimes even claim they or their spouse entered the union with a disorder like narcissism. The process can take anywhere from one to 10 years to wind through the creakingly slow and overburdened Philippine court system, costing at least \$4,800. Since 1999 lawmakers have regularly filed a bill to legalise divorce, only to see it languish in committee limbo -- until now.

For the first time ever, House of Representatives lawmakers are poised to approve the bill after backing it in preliminary votes. It would then head to the Senate where it faces opposition from conservative members.

However, the bill enjoys rare bipartisan support, a sign Alvarez says of the urgency of addressing broken marriages.

"It's a badge of stupidity because we are the only nation that does not see the problem," Alvarez, 60, told AFP.

The legislation would allow divorce and exempt poor people from legal fees, listing domestic violence, attempts to engage a spouse in prostitution and irreconcilable differences among the grounds for splitting up. —AFP ■

Windfall drop-off: Cargo plane loses over 3 tonnes of gold during takeoff in Siberia

YAKUTSK—An An-12 cargo plane carrying some 9 tonnes of gold has lost a third of its cargo during takeoff from the Yakutsk airport in Eastern Siberia, a local transport police spokesman told TASS on Thursday.

Earlier reports said that the plane's cargo hatch was partially torn off by a strong flow of air during takeoff. "A total of 172 gold bars weighing 3.4

tonnes have been found so far," the spokesman said, adding that none of the five crewmembers had been injured in the incident.

The airport's press service said that technicians who were preparing the plane for takeoff could have failed to properly fix the gold cargo. The plane safely landed at an airfield in the village of Magan, 12 kilometers from Yakutsk. — Tass ■



An An-12 cargo plane carrying some 9 tonnes of gold has lost a third of its cargo during takeoff. **PHOTO: TASS**

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BALI VOY.NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BALI VOY.NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SILKAGO LOGISTICS
PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY.NO. (015N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY.NO. (015N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL
SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V EVER ABLE VOY.NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V EVER ABLE VOY.NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING
LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SOUL OF LUCK VOY.NO. (1807-1808)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SOUL OF LUCK VOY.NO. (1807-1808) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT
(S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V ROYAL 27 VOY.NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ROYAL 27 VOY.NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT-2 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES
(S'PORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V INDUSTRIAL HOBART VOY.NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V INDUSTRIAL HOBART VOY.NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-3-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT-3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES
(S'PORE) PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

Donatella Versace says label will stop using fur in products

LONDON—Donatella Versace has said her family's luxury fashion label will no longer use real furs in its products, according to an interview with a British magazine.

The Italian fashion queen and Versace's creative director told *The Economist's* 1843 magazine that it would stop the practice, without providing further details on the change.

"Fur? I am out of that," Versace said. "I don't want to kill animals to make fashion."

"It doesn't feel right."

Versace's headquarters in Milan, Italy, could not be reached for comment on Wednesday night.

1843 noted the announcement was such a "volte-face" that at the time of the magazine writing its article, which was published online Wednesday, Versace's website was still urging customers to buy "fur-embellished coats that turn heads".

Versace had previously resisted pressure to join a host of other fashion brands, including Armani, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss and Ralph Lauren which had all already ditched furs from their collections. The luxury label has



Designer Donatella Versace greets the audience at the end of the show for fashion house Versace during the Men's Spring/Summer 2018 fashion shows in Milan, on 17 June 2017. PHOTO: AFP

historically included lots of furs across its ranges, from a variety of species including mink and raccoon dog, according to the Humane Society International (HSI), which campaigns globally for an end to the fur trade. It noted Versace's autumn/winter 2017 collection included laser cut mink and fox coats.

"Versace is a massively influential luxury brand that symbolises excess and glamour, and so its decision to stop using fur shows that compassionate fashion has never been more on

trend," said Claire Bass, executive director of HSI's UK arm.

However, the International Fur Federation said it was "disappointed" by the decision.

"The majority of top designers will continue to work with fur as they know it is a natural product that is produced responsibly," said its CEO Mark Oaten.

"With growing concern about the environment and plastics in fashion, I truly believe fur is the natural and responsible choice for designers and consumers." —AFP■

Stephen Hawking, the 'superhuman' pop culture star

PARIS—Very few people may have read and understood "A Brief History of Time", but the physicist Stephen Hawking carved himself out a place in pop culture equalled only by Albert Einstein.

While the brilliant mind behind the theory of relativity was instantly recognisable by Einstein's unruly "mad scientist" hair, Hawking's wheelchair and his synthesised voice made him

every bit as iconic.

Both knew how to play to the gallery, and that the key to scientific evangelism was not to take yourself too seriously -- in public.

Einstein famously stuck out his tongue out for a picture in 1951 and Hawking never passed up a chance to show his rapier wit.

Within months of his 1988 bestseller — dubbed "the greatest unread book in history" — entering the Guinness Book of

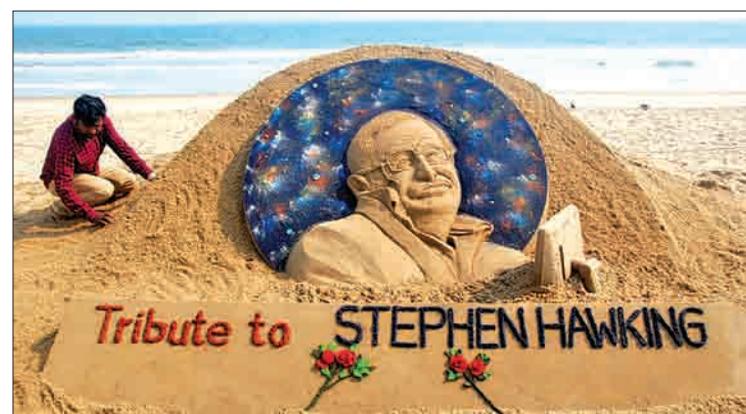
Records, the British cosmologist had become a star of the television chat show circuit and a pop cultural fixture.

He appeared as himself in everything from "Star Trek: The Next Generation" -- playing poker with a hologram of Einstein — to "The Simpsons" where he conceded that Homer's "theory of a donut-shaped universe is intriguing".

In fact, he appeared five times in the cartoon series as "the world's smartest man", and became such a running gag that he had his own Simpsons figurine.

In his 1999 debut, "They Saved Lisa's Brain", he even started a brawl by punching Principal Skinner.

He was usually called on to deliver pearls of gnomie self-deprecating wisdom such as: "Sometimes even the smartest of us can be the most childish. But not me, never..." —AFP■



Hawking became a star of the TV chat show circuit and a pop cultural fixture after the release of his 1988 bestseller "A Brief History of Time". PHOTO: AFP

He kissed a girl and didn't really like it

NEW YORK—For many young men inexperienced in romance, having one's first kiss with none other than Katy Perry would presumably be a welcome prospect.

Not so for Benjamin Glaze — a 20-year-old from Oklahoma who showed visible discomfort when kissed by the pop superstar as she served in her new role as a judge on talent show "American Idol."

Glaze explained on an episode broadcast this week that he had never kissed anyone before and had wanted to save the experience for a relationship.

His remark came after country star Luke Bryan, a fellow judge on the show, phrased as a question one of Perry's most famous lyrics: "Have you kissed a girl and liked it?"

Perry beckoned over Glaze and invited him for a kiss, which he delivered on her cheek. She followed up by quickly smacking him right on the lips. Glaze voiced shock and stumbled through his song before being dismissed by the judges.

Perry's forwardness, while

in line with the playful behavior of television personalities, triggered a flurry of commentary on social media — with some accusing her of sexual harassment amid the newfound focus on consent in the #MeToo movement.

Speaking to *The New York Times*, Glaze said he was raised in a conservative family and had felt "uncomfortable immediately" as "I wanted my first kiss to be special."

As the story generated growing commentary, Glaze on Wednesday went to Facebook to criticize the media coverage and said he was not complaining about Perry.

"I do not think I was sexually harassed by Katy Perry and I am thankful for the judges comments and critiques," he wrote.

"I was uncomfortable in a sense of how I have never been kissed before and was not expecting it.

"My main goal is to reach people through the universal love of music and not cause strife or anger against anyone or about any situation!" —AFP■



Katy Perry's forwardness in kissing American Idol contestant Benjamin Glaze triggered a flurry of commentary on social media. PHOTO: AFP

Big B had back and shoulder injury but he is fine now: Aamir Khan

MUMBAI —Aamir Khan today revealed that his "Thugs of Hindostan" co-star Amitabh Bachchan suffered shoulder and back injury, but is doing well now.

"I shot with him last night. He has problem in the back and shoulder as he has a lot of action sequences in the film. After a long time audience will get to see him doing action. So definitely it is a challenging film for him. But he is coping up well.

"There are times when you

have physical problems. He has injury on the shoulder and back. Day before yesterday he had lot of problem but he is better now," Aamir said at a press conference here.

The superstar, who is celebrating his 53rd birthday today, has flown in from Jodhpur where he was shooting for the Vijay Krishna Acharya-directed movie.

Aamir said it was a special moment for him to get birthday wishes from Bachchan.—PTI■

'Crown' star's pay reignites debate on gender inequality

NEW YORK — Gender equality may be the hot topic at Hollywood red carpets and press conferences but Claire Foy's pay on "The Crown" demonstrates that, beyond the rhetoric, progress remains painfully slow.

Producers admitted this week that Matt Smith, Prince Philip on the hit Netflix drama, had negotiated a better deal than Foy -- the star of the show as Queen Elizabeth II -- because of his perceived higher profile.

They did not reveal either salary but said Smith's 2010-2013 starring role on the BBC's "Doctor Who" had been the decisive factor.

Variety magazine last year put Foy's pay at \$40,000 an episode.

The revelation made headlines around the world but can hardly have been a surprise to anyone following the rankings of Hollywood's highest paid actors, tabulated annually by Forbes magazine.

Emma Stone placed top of the female earnings list last year, but the inconvenient truth for progressive Hollywood is that she would have ranked a paltry 15th had the chart included men.

Treatment of women in

show business has been in the spotlight since the Harvey Weinstein sexual misconduct scandal last year touched off a deluge of allegations that brought down powerful men in public life.

Companies, government agencies and even the US federal court system have been forced to re-evaluate sexual harassment policies, while bosses have been confronted with the unfairness of actresses' pay.

- 'Change-making' -

One corollary of a painful period of soul-searching has been the lifting of the taboo against discussing pay in public. Stories of unfairness have begun to surface with increasing regularity.

"You were not supposed to talk about salary, which is why all these conversations about pay equity in Hollywood are so refreshing, because it's not something that was shared," says Melissa Silverstein, founder of the Women and Hollywood website.

Oscar-nominated "All the Money in the World" hit the headlines in January when Mark Wahlberg and Michelle Williams were called back to re-shoot scenes expunging Kevin Spacey, who was sacked over



Producers of "The Crown" admitted that Matt Smith, Prince Philip on the hit Netflix drama, had negotiated a better deal than Claire Foy -- the star of the show as Queen Elizabeth II. PHOTO: AFP

allegations of sexual abuse.

It emerged that Williams had been paid less than \$1,000 for the extra work while Wahlberg got \$1.5 million, a bonus he ended up giving away to the Time's Up women's movement as the furore blew up.

While Wahlberg's gesture was considered noble and generous, pundits objected that it didn't address the inherent unfairness. Silverstein told AFP, however, that the simple fact that people were beginning to notice and talk about the issue was "change-making."

"To understand why it's so exciting and revolutionary that people are actually sharing salaries now is because it pierces

the silence," she said.

Television has traditionally boasted a more progressive approach to pay, in no small part thanks to the stars of hit 1990s sit-com "Friends," who set the standard by negotiating as a team for the same salaries.

- 'Game of chicken' -

The lead cast of "The Big Bang Theory" and "Game of Thrones" followed suit and all earn the same -- estimated at a shade under \$1 million an episode for the sit-com and \$500,000 for "Thrones."

"Gray's Anatomy" heroine Ellen Pompeo also got in on the act when she renegotiated her contract to boost her pay to \$20 million a year, or \$575,000 per

episode.

A star's value to Hollywood, says Silverstein, is determined not by his or her talent or even commercial potential but by what is known as their "quotes" -- whatever amount of money they earned on their last project.

Foy, 33, was already making a name for herself in British costume drama, with roles in "Upstairs Downstairs" and "Wolf Hall," when she was tapped to play the queen but her star profile was slightly lower than Smith's. Critics argued on Twitter that the pay discrepancy should only have shown up in the first season, before Foy was garlanded with awards and acclaim.—AFP ■

Hungary in cultural diplomacy push with first US opera tour

NEW YORK — Hungary on Wednesday launched a cultural diplomacy push in New York with its prolific state-run opera planning a full two weeks of music and ballet.

The Hungarian State Opera and Hungarian National Ballet will make their US debut by sending 350 musicians and dancers to New York with support from Prime Minister Viktor Orban's right-wing government.

The October 30-November 11 performances at Lincoln Center will highlight Hungarian works including "Bank Ban," a signature opera of national anthem composer Ferenc Erkel, and "Bluebeard's Castle," the only opera of early 20th-century giant Bela Bartok.

The company will also perform the more recent "Mario and the Magician," based on the Thomas Mann novella, and



Dancers of the Hungarian National Ballet rehearse for an adaptation of George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" in Budapest, Hungary in January. PHOTO: AFP

"Swan Lake" in the version of late Dutch choreographer Rudi van Dantzig.

"We never had in the history

of Hungarian culture anything that is this long, this big, mobilizes this much (personnel) and has a budget like this," Ferenc

Kumin, Hungary's consul general in New York, told a news conference.

Szilveszter Okovacs, general

director of the Hungarian State Opera, said that the government agreed to some \$3 million to support the performances in New York. The Hungarian State Opera, whose landmark building in Budapest is under renovation, has been touring widely internationally including a 19-city tour of Japan last year. The state opera is among the world's most productive, with Okovacs putting its number of performances at more than 400 per year.

Orban has cast himself as a defender of Christian values, claiming that an influx of Muslims and Africans poses a threat to European culture.

The Hungarian State Opera raised eyebrows earlier this year by staging a predominantly white "Porgy and Bess," which composer George Gershwin intended to be played by an African American cast.—AFP ■



Futsal players from YZN (red) and MIC Legend (yellow) vie for the ball in yesterday's Group D match of MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium. **PHOTO: MFF FUTSAL**

MIC Legend, Best Friends and RDZ win in MFF Futsal Open Cup

MIC LEGEND, Best Friends and RDZ notched double-digit, lopsided wins in Group (B), (C) and (D) matches of the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2018 yesterday at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium in Yangon.

In Group (B) matches, the Zombie futsal team trounced

MSJ by a score of 7-0, while Best Friends won big over YGR Star by a score of 11-3. In Group (C) matches, the UPT futsal team defeated MCY by a score of 9-6, while RDZ earned a big win over DKTY by a score of 9-2. In Group (D) matches, 41 Return futsal men's team beat the Ho-

pan futsal team by a score of 6-3, while the well-known futsal team MIC Legend eliminated the amateur club YZN by a score of 17-4.

Officials also recognised the standout play of individual players from each and every game played yesterday.

The best performance awards were garnered by Pyae Sone Aung from Zombie team, Lin Lin Tun from Best Friends team, Maung Maung from MCY team, Thura Zaw from 41 Return team, Hla Myo from RDZ team and Thet Ko Ko Aung from MIC Legend team.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■

Myanmar national football selects players for AFC qualification

THE members of the Myanmar national football team, who will play against Kyrgyzstan in a qualification match of the AFC Asian Cup on 22 March at Incheon Stadium in South Korea, were revealed yesterday.

The list was confirmed by Myanmar national team head coach Gerd Zeise, said an official from MFF. Goalkeepers are Thina Sithu, Kyaw Zin Htet and San Sat Naing.

Defenders are Kyaw Zin Lwin, Kyaw Swar Lin, Zaw Min Htun, David Htan, Htike Htike Aung and Win Min Htut.

Midfielders are Thein Than Win, Hlaing Bo Bo, Sithu Aung, Yan Naing Oo, Tin Win Aung, Kyaw Zin Oo, Yan Aung Kyaw, Kyi Linn, Mg Mg Lwin and Lwin Moe Aung. Strikers are Kyaw Ko Ko currently playing for Thailand's Chang Rai FC, AungThu. currently playing for Thailand's Police Tero FC, Zin Min Tun and Aee Soe. All the players selected are football stars from Myanmar National League and Myanmar national team, an official added.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■



Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi scored twice in the match against Chelsea in Barcelona on 14 March 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Magical Messi will never leave Barcelona – Conte

BARCELONA— Antonio Conte said he believed Lionel Messi will remain at Barcelona for the rest of his playing days after watching the Argentine maestro destroy Chelsea's Champions League hopes.

Messi, 30, scored twice and set up a goal for Ousmane Dembele as Barca beat Chelsea 3-0 at the Camp Nou on Wednesday for a 4-1 aggregate triumph.

The double took Messi to 100 Champions League goals

while his opener, coming after 129 seconds, was the fastest goal of his illustrious career.

Messi has frequently been linked with a big-money move to the Premier League but Conte is convinced the striker will retire at Barcelona.

"I think Leo wants to stay until the end of his career with Barcelona," Conte said.

"We're talking about an impossible situation. I repeat: we must have great respect for this player. We are talking about a fantastic player.

"I think he wants to stay in Barcelona for the end of his career. I think it's the right way for him. He's writing with his team-mates a great story with

Barcelona."

After full-time, Conte left the field with a congratulatory arm around Messi's shoulder but Chelsea had chances too, most notably through Marcos Alonso and Antonio Rudiger, who both hit the woodwork.

Alonso also thought he should have been awarded a penalty in the second half after he went down under the challenge of Gerard Pique.

Chelsea striker Olivier Giroud believes his team deserved more.

"Obviously on both matches I regret the posts or bars that we could have. You have to have some success, a little luck," Giroud said.—AFP ■